



Recommendation for Drew Mikita

October 8, 2024

Dear Selection Committee ~

I am writing you to strongly recommend Drew Mikita in his promotion process from associate to full professor within Colorado Mountain College. Drew exemplifies the values of Colorado Mountain College in and out of the classroom, being innovative with his pedagogy and collaborations, holding integrity in his work with students, colleagues and his private patients, and caring in a way that I have rarely seen in a colleague, friend or professional.

On the topic of **care**, Drew Mikita gets to know his students on a level that I find inspiring. He has rescued students who have found themselves in need of a place to stay, given students cash jobs doing dog and house-sitting for he and his wife, and developed deeply personal and long-term friendships with some of his students and their families. He cares about his students, friends and colleagues while still putting family first. He and his wife were dog-sitters for my family's dogs when they were alive, and Drew never failed to send pictures of the dogs having a great time at their home, then recount detailed stories about the funny things they did. When I told him that I had never been to see his favorite band, he gave me tickets to join he and his wife at a stadium concert. It was a high point of my year. That kind of care comes back to Drew again and again as he is nominated for faculty of the year perennially, and I don't remember how many times he has been awarded that honor. When he taught CEPA through our local private high school, they asked him to be their graduation speaker. He has been selected as our local CMC campus graduation speaker. I overhear students in my classroom saying, if you haven't taken a course with Drew, you have to! He talks about real life issues in his classroom.

When I say that Drew is **innovative**, I would like to describe a collaboration that has run for years at the Breckenridge campus, pausing only briefly for the pandemic of 2020-21. Building Hope is a local non-profit that works to destigmatize mental illness, work on suicide prevention and provide resources and events to improve mental-emotional well-being in our community. When Drew Mikita (health and human services, psychology), Chef Ian Buchanan (culinary) and me teamed up with Building Hope to offer "Cooking up Hope in the Kitchen" it offered a truly unique cross-disciplinary way to approach well-being. Drew talked about how food is tied to our feelings, often

recounting his own darkest moments in an authentic and raw way with our students, embodying the courage that it takes to open up about things that most need talking about. That collaboration received accolades and even got captured by a film crew who wanted to do a mini docuseries about creative things communities around the world were doing to improve mental health and prevent suicide.

When Drew approaches courses like positive psychology, he has his students identify role-models and reflect on why they admire that person. I often hear students talking around campus about this exercise which gets them thinking. When I came into his classroom to observe his teaching once near finals week in a psychology course, he was personally acting out different mental illnesses to quiz his students on what they knew of the pathologies. He may be the only faculty member who I have seen cry openly when describing cases, pathologies and his own past struggles, which I take as a great strength. Drew is masterful at keeping his students present and engaged, sharing and processing together in a learning environment that is approachable and fun.

Most importantly, Drew is a compassionate, supportive, giving, wise, creative, expressive, loving human being who I am humbled and proud to call a colleague and friend. I have every confidence that Drew will continue to serve the College, his discipline, our profession and community for years to come as a full professor.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions during the promotion process.

Sincerely,

Justin Pollack, ND (electronically signed)

Dr. Justin Pollack, ND

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